

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2276

BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, ICTFU, JA, SN, VN
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH DEVAN NAIR

REFS: A) SINGAPORE 2145, B) TOKYO 6931 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. IN WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE
AND LABOFF, NTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL DEVAN NAIR SAID HE WOULD SOON
BE WRITING AAFLI DIRECTOR MORRIS PALADINO ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY
OF ESTABLISHING COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AAFLI AND ARO.
NAIR ALSO DISCUSSED RECENT VISIT OF SOHYO OFFICIALS TO SINGAPORE
AND THEIR DESIRE TO ASSIST ARO. IN ADDITION, NAIR MENTIONED THAT
A WFTU REPRESENTATIVE RECENTLY INFORMED NTUC THAT VIETNAMESE
WERE PLANNING TO START AN ASIAN LABOR PROGRAM ON WFTU'S BEHALF.
END SUMMARY.

2.. CHARGE AND LABOFF CALLED ON NTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL DEVAN NAIR
UPON HIS RETURN FROM A CONFERENCE IN ROME TO DISCUSS RESULTS
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OF THE RECENT ARO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING AND THE FORTHCOMING ILO
CONFERENCE (SEE SEPTTEL). NAIR CONFIRMED THAT ARO EXECUTIVE BOARD
HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATIVE LINK BETWEEN

ARO AND AAFLI (REFTELS), AND SAID HE WOULD SOON WRITE TO AAFLI
DIRECTOR MORRIS PALADINO. NAIR WILL PROPOSE THAT ARO'S
PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION BUREAU CONSULT WITH AAFLI TO SEE WHAT

ASSISTANCE LATTER COULD PROVIDE FOR ARO PROJECTS. NOTWITHSTANDING ICFTU SECRETARIAT'S RESERVATIONS REGARDING SUCH COOPERATION (WHICH WERE EXPRESSED IN BOARD MEETING), NAIR DID NOT THINK THAT SECRETARIAT WOULD TRY TO BLOCK AAFLI ASSISTANCE BECAUSE CONSENSUS IN ARO FAVORED SUCH A ROLE. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO APPROVE AAFLI ASSISTANCE ON A PROJECT-BY-PROJECT BASIS. ALTHOUGH NAIRO THOUGHT AAFLI WOULD BE PLEASED WITH ARO DECISION, HE SAID HE WAS SURE THE AFL-CIO WOULD BE DISPLEASED WITH HIM BECAUSE OF HIS CRITICISM OF LATTER'S PROTECTIONIST STANCE EXPRESSED IN PAPER HE PRESENTED TO THE ASIAN LABOR SUMMIT.

3. NAIRO EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING AN ARO PROJECT IN THAILAND TO ASSIST RURAL POOR AND THAT AAFLI ASSISTANCE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THIS PROJECT. AFTER HIS MEETINGS EARLIER THIS YEAR WITH THAI PRIME MINISTER THANIN, INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK, NAIR IS CONVINCED THAT THAIS WOULD WELCOME ARO PRESENCE. DESPITE MISGIVINGS OF SOME OF HIS WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COLLEAGUES WHO OBJECT TO THAI MILITARY-BACKED REGIME, NAIRO SEES SUCH A PROJECT AS AIDING "DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT" AND BOLSTERING THAILAND AGAINST COMMUNISM. PROJECT IS STILL VERY TENTATIVE, BUT NAIR HOPES TO OBTAIN FUNDS FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY FROM ESCAP.

4. WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH SOHYO OFFICIALS FOLLOWING THE LABOR SUMMIT, NAIR SAID THEY HAD PROPOSED MAKING DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARO'S ASIAN SOLIDARITY FUND. NAIRO RESPONDED THAT SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE SOHYO HAS WFTU AFFILIATES. HE SUGGESTED THAT CONTRIBUTIONS COULD COME FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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SOHYO'S ICFTU AFFILIATES AS WELL AS FROM THOSE SOHYO UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS. NAIR EVEN SUGGESTED THAT SOHYO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER AFFILIATING WITH ICFTU, WHICH WOULD PERMIT DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO ARO. SOHYO REPS REPLIED THAT THIS WOULD VIOLATE THEIR POLICY OF "POSITIVE NEUTRALISM". NAIR COUNTERED THAT MANY WEST EUROPEAN UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH ICFTU HAD REGULAR -- THOUGH NOT INSTITUTIONALIZED--CONTACTS WITH SOVIET BLOC UNIONS. SOHYO OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, STILL DEMURRED AND IT APPEARED THAT SOHYO CONSIDERED NAIR'S OTHER PROPOSAL TO BE THE MORE REALISTIC OPTION FOR ASSISTING ARO. NAIRO OBSERVED THAT HE WELCOMED AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY SOHYO INTEREST IN ARO.

5. FINALLY, NAIR VOLUNTEERED THAT WFTU SECRETARIAT REPRESENTATIVE, NAHENDRA SENG, HAD RECENTLY MET WITH NTUC OFFICIAL IN SINGAPORE. WFTU REP REPORTEDLY SAID THAT VIETNAMESE HAD PROMISED TO ORGANIZE A LABOR PROGRAM IN ASIA ON WFTU'S BEHALF. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES THIS WOULD ENTAIL OR WHAT COUNTRIES WERE TO BE TARGETED. NAIRO WAS SCEPTICAL THAT THIS WOULD AMOUNT TO MUCH BECAUSE MOST ASIAN UNIONS WERE AFFILIATED

WITH ARO AND WOULD NOT ASSOCIATE WITH WFTU-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES.
HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WOULD WATCH CLOSELY FOR ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN
THIS AREA.
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